

Compare roles in health

Not sure where to start with the hundreds of NHS careers? Use our compare roles section to get bite-size information on the entry requirements and training, pay and conditions, prospects and skills needed of up to three roles. If there is something that you think you could do, then get more in-depth information on the role.

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• Social worker [1]

Social workers make a difference to individuals and families by helping them live their lives more successfully.

Training and qualifications required

To practise as a social worker in England, you must be registered with Social Work England. To register with Social Work England, you need to study for an approved programme in social work. Degree courses take three or four years full time and some combine social work with mental health or learning disability nursing. To get onto a social work degree course you usually need appropriate level 3 qualifications. If you already have a degree in another subject, you could take a postgraduate qualification (Diploma or Masters) in social work; train through Step up to Social Work (combining work and study), apply for the Frontline 2-year programme combining study with supervised practical work in child protection or the 2-year Think Ahead fast-track scheme to become a mental health social worker. The scheme blends academic learning with extensive on-the-job experience. A degree apprenticeship in social work has also been approved.

Expected working hours and salary range

Social workers working in the NHS are paid on the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay system. You would typically start on AfC band 6. With further training and experience, you could apply for more senior positions at bands 7 and above. Most social workers in the NHS work standard hours, which are likely to be around 37.5 a week. They may work some evenings or weekends. Terms and conditions will usually be different for social workers working outside of the NHS.

Desirable skills and values

Social workers need to be able to work under pressure, deal with very challenging behaviour, organise their own workload, be understanding of other people's lifestyles, work with people from all walks of life and be happy visiting people where they live. They also need organisational skills, empathy (able to see things from other points of view), relationship-building skills, resilience, problem-solving skills and motivational skills.

Prospects

You may decide to specialise in a particular client group or issue such as the elderly, young people,

substance misuse, mental health or domestic violence. You could train as a high intensity therapist, as part of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies service. With experience, you could become a senior social worker, supervising the work of other social workers, or a primary mental health worker in child and adolescent mental health services. You may be able to progress into a management position, responsible for a department or an area.

Related roles

- High intensity therapist [2]
- Occupational therapist [3]
- Clinical psychologist [4]
- Youth intensive psychological practitioner? [5]

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